

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. Method for protecting a file with proprietary content against unauthorized copying by file sharing by other people's computers which are pooled to form an internet file sharing site and which make the file available in the form of randomly stored data records, each of which includes part of the proprietary content and metadata which inter alia consist of at least one hash ID and e.g. the title, characterised by the following steps:
  - searching for the content to be protected on the internet
  - saving at least the hash ID of each data record provided as a hit by at least one other person's computer
  - generating a data record which is modified from the data record provided and which includes at least the saved hash ID and replacement content data linked to the latter
  - answering inquiries from other people's computers about the file to be protected, by providing the modified data record.
2. Method according to claim 1, characterized by the following partial steps:
  - entering at least one search term identifying the file to be protected, in a local database of one's own computer
  - determining, entering and saving IP addresses of at least some of the other people's computers in the local database of one's own computer
  - setting up a connection of one's own computer to the internet and starting the search by scanning for the search term on the other people's computers.
3. Method according to claim 2, characterized in that one's own computer provides the modified data record belonging to the file to be protected, for downloading by the other people's computers designated by the saved IP addresses.

4. Method according to claim 1, characterized in that the hash ID of each data record provided by another person's computer as a hit is compared with the saved hash IDs, and hits for which the result of comparison is positive are not further processed into a modified data record.
5. Method according to claim 1, characterized in that the IP address of one's own computer is regularly altered.
6. Method according to claim 1, characterized in that inquiries by other people's computers about the file to be protected are logged in anonymous form.
7. Method according to claim 1, characterized in that searching for the content to be protected is done only up to a predetermined expiry date.